

Address by Pali Lehohla

South Africa Statistician General and

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At the 10th ASSD in Kampala

13-01-2014

Excellencies

Prime Minister of Uganda

Minister of State

Minister of State

Directors General of Statistics

Directors General of CRVS

CEO of UBOS and UCR

African Statistics Elders

Chairs of Statistical Councils and Boards

Chairs of Statistics Associations

Directors and CEOs of Statistics Schools

Diplomatic cops

My brother Dr Charles Lufumpa of AfDB

My brother Dr Dosie Ezi

Director of UNFPA

Ladies and gentlemen

If the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again?

Addressing you here in Munyonyo I have chosen the theme “statistics, umonyo (salt) for political will.” I would be remiss if I only spoke about salt, when I am honoured and equally humbled to have to address fellow Africans at the opening of the 10th Session of the ASSD which takes place here in Uganda, one of the countries in the Great Lakes. Therefore I should talk about water as well. Lakes are a source of water and have supported societies since time immemorial. Water and salt have sustained lives. When rivers would run dry, our forefathers and mothers would gather around the lakes to ensure that life continues. Where there is water, there is life. Even scientists who search for answers of our universe and its extraterritorial cosmic space, the one thing they look for -- to confirm if there was once a life, if there is life, or if there ever will be life -- is water. The Khoi and the San of Southern Africa, revering water called it shasa, the deep precious water and thus our Strategy for Harmonisation of Statistics in Africa was carefully chosen to take on the acronym SHaSA.

It is not just any life that scientists and specialists try to find solutions for, it is human life. And where there is human life, there has always been, there is, and there always shall be, a need for measurement. It is by no accident that as statisticians we meet here in Kampala today. Water, life, people and measurement have always been bound by one causality, if not fate. As fate has ever dictated before, Uganda is one of the countries that I had to seek wisdom from when I got appointed as Statistician-General for South Africa. It is a country in which the intellectual space was created for the study of official statistics and this, the official statistics, are the salt for political will which is my theme today.

Talking about salt, called umonyo I remind myself of Munyonyo where we are which seats on the edge of this conurbation of lakes where fish abound. I am tempted to play pun of Munyonyo with umonyo, salt, and ask ourselves the question, if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? I leave the answer for later, but those who read Matthew 5 to 13 may indeed know the answer. My theme today is the toil of statisticians: the umonyo for political will. Statistics feed political will their toil, statisticians, is the salt of the earth. Their toil is the salt of vision 2063, the African integration agenda, yet we need to ponder the question again and again: if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again?

An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena is the dream of the African child today. It is an inspirational dream, a rallying cry that by 2063 Africa will be socially, economically and politically integrated and the net product of this is Africa will be prosperous and peaceful. As the statistics community we are inclined to believe that indeed this vision is possible. With the steps we have taken in the past nine years we can confirm that the direction and pace is suggestive of progress and indeed Vision 2063 is within reach. It confirms that we are the salt of political will.

Let me provide some history of our recent past in order to alert us to the important question of if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? In 2005 African Statisticians met in Younde to address the fact that United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), by its own admission had no statistical programme for Africa, especially for the 2010 Round of Population Censuses. African

statisticians resolved that ECA has to be dumped for an alternative fora. Thus vividly illustrating the point that when the salt has become tasteless, it cannot be made salty again, it is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. Convinced that the UNECA is an African agency we agreed that in fact it is ourselves national statisticians who have become tasteless salt. As men and women of good will we dedicated ourselves to lead with determination. The ASSD was thus borne in Cape Town South Africa to be the salt of the earth and share this beautiful salt with UNECA, and all pan African institutions, thereby reviving it.

Our objectives were to ensure that Africa counts in the 2010 Round of Censuses and especially we set ourselves an ambition to address countries in conflict, emerging out of conflict and those about revisit conflict. Our record as African Statisticians is a proud one. In the 2010 Round of Censuses 48 African countries conducted a Census, a record count. Amongst these we note with pride that Sudan conducted its Census that paved the way for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and African statisticians, from Mozambique, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria and Ethiopia convened in Sudan to make its miracle happen. Angola ran its census after four decades without one in 2014, Cote d Ivoire had its census this year after a period of strife, so was Liberia. Sierra Leone postponed its census because of the ebola outbreak. Somalia conducted a large scale survey paving its road to peace. As Africans we were not shy to face the government of His Excellency President Museveni for postponing the Census not only once but twice in 2012 and 2013. We are delighted that Uganda has successfully conducted its Census with preliminary results delivered two months after conducting the census. This, the tenth edition of ASSD will

go down as a fitting tribute to Uganda, its peoples and leadership. It confirms that our direction and pace is suggestive of progress, of achieving the promise that 2063 agenda is possible. We are the salt of political will. Madagascar and the DRC will run their Census in 2015, putting paid a record achievement by Africa and Africans.

Beyond the counting we have published a book by African scholars on the Demography of Africa and as all data come on stream, we shall put all the unit records together anonymised to come up with an African population file which African researchers and beyond can use to amongst others learn and interrogate the ever illusive demographic dividend and other phenomena in Africa.

We can confirm progress in that as part of this mega mobilisation we have been able to introduce to the ASSD, the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS), with the ministers responsible meeting every two years since 2012 and the annual ASSDs convening not only statisticians but civil registrars every year since 2010. This is a success worth recognising. At this the tenth ASSD we have with us the Councils and Boards of National Statistics, Country Statistics Associations and Statistics Training Centres. This is indeed a data revolution and Africans have tasted immense success, the salt of political will. In the period since 2006, African countries and pan-African institutions demonstrated what is achievable when we work together. This approach successfully notched many firsts, including a record International Comparisons Program 2011, (ICP), where 49 African countries participated and our own Michel Mouyela Koutola from the Congo was the first African ICP manager delivering excellently on the global stage. How proud of this we are. We are notching successes of giving life to the African Peer Review Mechanisms by measuring governance and peace, which were

once holy cows. The Global Agricultural Strategy has been birthed here in Africa and the Young African Statistician Programme shows that indeed we are committed to the future and the 2063 agenda. We have the Strategy for the Harmonisation of Statistics in Africa, (SHaSA), as well as the African Statistics Charter to address the 2063 agenda. Applied the strategy intelligently, it is possible to achieve our goals of 2063 faster and better. We are the salt of political will. We are umonyo, the salt, we are the Shasa, the deep precious water.

We are pleased to be in Uganda when the son of the soil, a pioneer, a true pan African, teacher, leader and mentor, the winner of the Mahalanobis award, the master himself presents his Umonyo, the salt of political will, his book titled, The Emerging Data Revolution in Africa: Strengthening the Statistics, Policy and Decision-Making Chain. Professor Kireyera is the Umonyo of political will. He is the salt of the earth. The camaraderie and the constellational leadership in statistics we have experienced confirms Matthew 5 to 13 that "Salt is good, Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

African statisticians are increasingly becoming the salt of the earth, the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. This is what we see African statisticians and their toil in the immense task of building a prosperous and peaceful Africa. This is the message we wish your excellency to convey to the heads of state Summit in Addis towards end of January.

Yet as we notch these notable successes that his excellency is requested to convey to heads of states the question keeps nagging us "if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no

longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.” We rightfully also report that we are increasingly bothered by the emergent deteriorating working relationships and arrangements amongst the pan African institutions that border on exclusion of some. This we have observed since 2011/2012. The salt is increasingly becoming tasteless and in time it will no longer be good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. Our pan African institutions are no longer working as well as they used to, there is absolute disregard for important pan African statistical products, one of which is the data from International Comparisons Programme without which the 2063 agenda remains a pipe dream. Pan-African institutions have not used it in the industrialisation strategy of Africa making such a strategy an empty shell devoid of delivering Agenda 2063. Instead these institutions are chasing a false so called integration index. The CRVS programme, a mighty flagship program initiated in Africa against global scepticism has set the world alight, with Asia and Latin America learning from us. It is led by an extremely dedicated team, one permanent staff and two others working against terrible odds yet delivering value and a model of work that is incredibly innovative. However given the quantum of work they face, even the most brilliant of people and systems collapse. We are putting Africa’s weight and hope on very a very vulnerable crutch and we expect miracles. If this situation is left unattended, Africa having lost out on Industrial Revolution, Agricultural Revolution will lose out as usual and again this time around on the Data Revolution. This time around by its own making of failing to strategise, prioritise and allocate resources. Successful statistical programmes, the salt of political will, is not brought to policy at the pan African level, and some decisions at the pan-African level are made in ways that hold no potential for possibility of implementation because

they fail to draw from the salt of political will, statistics, umonyo. Unlike in other regions such as Europe, placement of staff in pan African institutions leaves a lot desired in as far as how adequately pan African are the individuals deployed. It is indeed necessary to put such employees or prospective candidates through institutions such as Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute (TMALI) in South Africa which boasts great African intellectuals such as Archie Mafeje, Mamdani and others in order to have coherence between a pan African institution and its staffing. We need to support the pan African Statistics and Demography Schools in Anglo, Franco, Arab and Portuguese speaking Africa, in fact we need to be deliberate in delivering multilingualism amongst these institutions. Your Excellency we need these concerns to be brought to the urgent attention of Heads of State in Addis in their Summit at the end of the month. We make these points in the knowledge that whilst we are the salt of the earth; when the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. This hard fact we experienced with the UNECA and in 2005 we were compelled to take a resolution that we shall dump UNECA for an alternative. Where water accumulated we know it will accumulate again. We measure, we know success from failure and we do not want to go back to 2005, but without intervention we are fast heading there and this will cause 2063 Africa agenda to be just a pipe dream. This is why we are communicating our successes and failures with candour.

We are convinced that "Salt is good and by having it among ourselves, we can be at peace with each other." We therefore remain committed because we are umonyo, the salt of political will, we are the shasa, the deep precious water. We are the salt of the earth, we are the light of the

world. A city set on a hill that cannot be hidden. We are those who do not light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that it gives light to all who are in the house. But we are also concerned and worried that when salt loses its saltiness, it is not possible to make it salty again. It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. This ugly prospect we must confront fearlessly and defeat. Our constellational leadership model and our innovative funding strategies with deliberately disruptive systems to set in motion renewal and remove inertia from our processes are without parallel. When our call is heard and possibly heeded we will revive the pre 2011 successes and propel Africa even further, faster and better towards its integration agenda.

I thank the government of Uganda and its peoples for hosting us

Thank you